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UNMUZZLE THE OX.

A SERMON

PREACHED BY

A. B. MACKAY, Minister of Crescent Street Church, Montreal,

ON BEHALF OF

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S AUGMENTATION FUND.

"Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"
—1 Cor. ix. 9, also 1 Tim. v. 18, and Deut. xxv. 4.

DOETH GOD TAKE CARE FOR OXEN? Yes, most assuredly. God takes care for every creature He has made, great and small, and would have even dumb creatures treated kindly. Therefore He gave a law forbidding the muzzling of the oxen while treading out the grain. He knew the heart of man, and its constant tendency to become hard and grasping. He knew that after his people were settled in Canaan—that land flowing with milk and honey—many a close-fisted farmer would put a muzzle on his ox, because he grudged the few ears of grain it ate while going round and round the threshing-floor. Therefore, by this command, He, as it were, cries to such,

HANDS OFF!

Leave the beast alone. "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." Let him take his fill. So long as he is working hard, the little he can eat will neither harm him nor ruin you. Whereas, if you muzzle him, you may save a little, but you will do a great injury; for it would be the height of cruelty to tantalize the poor beast, hour after hour, with the sight, the smell, and even the touch of that which he wishes all the time to eat, and cannot take a mouthful of. Will not that muzzle make him restive and ill-tempered? Without a muzzle,

THE OX WILL LIKE HIS WORK,

and do it well. With a muzzle, the ox will hate his work, and do it ill. Hence, this kind and considerate command; and it is just a sample of God's goodness to all His creatures. The Royal Humane Society of England, and kindred institutions, are pointed to, and rightly, as instances of the kindly spirit of modern civilization, but he who studies the much neglected laws of Moses will find them fragrant with the sweet perfume of God's benevolence of which this is such a beautiful example.

In all the arrangements of His large and great dominion, there is nothing niggardly, though there is the most marvellous economy. Even what we in our short-sightedness call His prodigality, turns out on closer inspection to be the highest economy, because the prodigality of perfect love. What tongue can tell His bountiful care? He clothes the grass of the field in a glory greater than Solomon's. He feeds all the fowls of the air, though they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He giveth to the beast his food,

and to the young ravens which cry. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

But out of this ancient law of Moses, Paul gets

SOMETHING MORE

than an evidence of God's care for dumb animals. Inspired by the Holy Ghost, as he gazed on it he saw it brighten into something much higher and more glorious! Therefore, he tells us that this is a command, not given for the sake of oxen alone, nor even principally, but above all and without doubt for the sake of the ministers of the Gospel. See how pregnant and far reaching is every word of God! When He gave this law at Sinai, His eyes were resting not so much on oxen treading out the grain in the Holy Land, as on men laboriously preparing the bread of life for their fellows in every age and throughout all the world; and for the encouragement and protection of such, He framed this law "because he that ploweth ought to plow in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking" (R.V.). Thus Paul interprets this old Levitical law and elevates it into an obligation resting on the Christian Church in regard to the support of the ministry. And it is plain that this command thus interpreted was a

GREAT FAVOURITE

with the apostle, and often on his lips. Twice in his epistles, he quotes it in the same connection. Nor is it hard to see the cause of this. It embodies the responsibility of the Church towards those who labour in word and doctrine, in a figure familiar, striking, memorable; a figure, moreover, which connects this special obligation towards one class with the glorious principle of God's universal benevolence and care for all His creatures.

Looking at the question in this light, we get valuable instruction regarding both the ministry of the Gospel and its support.

Think of **THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL** as here referred to. There is a ministry committed to special individuals, *i.e.*, there is a class of men in the Church set apart for a particular kind of work, to which they are to devote themselves exclusively. This is a very patent fact in our ecclesiastical organization as Presbyterians. Such a body of men does exist in our Church; and it is well that it is so, for this arrangement is

NO HUMAN DEVICE

which may be altered from time to time, and, if we see fit, abolished; it is a divine ordinance. The existence of such a body of men is, indeed, a proof of the care and love of the risen Head of the Church. "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." What gifts? The apostle Paul tells us, "He gave some Apostles and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 11-12. In the books of the New Testament, we have the ministry of the extraordinary gifts of the risen Saviour in a form more perfect than any early Church enjoyed, and in the services of these workers whom He still raises up to minister in holy things, we have the ordinary gifts of this dispensation of grace. This fact, that there is a distinct body of men set apart to spiritual work in the Christian Church, needs to be strongly insisted on in these days, for there is a tendency in some quarters, and under the delusion of a higher spirituality, to ignore this, and to forget the warning of James, "Be not many teachers." How many, when they have a mere smattering of divine knowledge, think themselves perfectly competent to stand up and teach every one. How many say that they have an unction from above, and know everything, whereas the Holy Spirit says, "If a man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it."

While there is

NOTHING SACERDOTAL

in the Christian ministry, and any attempt to elevate any body of men into a priestly caste, as if they were in a special sense the lot of God, is utterly subversive of Christianity, still we must never forget that it has pleased God to call certain men to official positions in His Church, and that therefore the Christian ministry is stamped with a peculiarly sacred character. To despise it is to despise our Saviour's good gifts, and to throw contempt on His infinite wisdom. Paul, in all his labours for the Church, recognized this grand fact; therefore it was his practice to ordain elders in every Church, or cause them to be ordained. Nowhere did he leave a company of Christians without some among them who should labour in word and doctrine; who should rule and feed the flock of God; who should give themselves wholly to this work, and keep themselves therefore disentangled from the ordinary affairs of life. Such labourers are spoken of under various figures in the context. They are *soldiers*, fighting for the great Captain of Salvation—officers in His army. Some who follow divisive courses would reorganize this army, and have all officers and no privates. They are also *vine dressers*, tending the vineyard he has planted and watered and hedged in. They are to preserve and train and nourish the vines, so that they may produce abundant fruit. They are also *shepherds*, loving the sheep for whom the Good Shepherd has died; feeding them from day to day under the eye of the Great Shepherd, who rose from the dead, and looking forward to that time when they shall present each one blameless before the Chief Shepherd in His kingdom of glory. They are also *ploughmen*, breaking up the fallow ground by the plow of repentance and conviction, casting in the good seed of the eternal Word, harrowing it in by prayer and supplication, reaping and threshing the spiritual harvest on earth. They are also called *oxen*. This is the humblest figure

used, but it is very striking and instructive. The work of the Christian minister, like that of the ox treading out the grain, is

IMPORTANT.

Without the labor of the oxen the eastern farmer would have no bread; famine and death would stare him and his family in the face. So without the ministry of the Gospel the people perish for lack of knowledge. It was high wisdom as well as sincere piety which led to the adoption of the motto, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." Where there is no breaking of the bread of life there is spiritual famine and spiritual death—aye, and an end is put to all true progress and prosperity. A family, a village, a town, a city, a province, a nation, outside the influence of the Christian ministry is dead in trespasses and sins, and passing on to inevitable ruin, moral, spiritual, and material. Those who scoff at Christianity little dream of the many indirect benefits they derive from it. We often hear the work of Christian missions pronounced a failure by those who have never taken the trouble either to record facts or to weigh their words.

THE LATE CHARLES DARWIN

was in no sense of the word a Christian—indeed he confessed that there were two things he felt no need of, viz., poetry and religion; yet, as an accurate observer of facts, he had no sympathy with those scoffers, and says that if any such happened to be shipwrecked on one of the South Sea islands their first hope would be that the missionaries had preceded them. Why so? Because, if the missionaries had not preceded them, their certain fate would be to be killed, and perhaps eaten; whereas, if they had preceded them, they would be sure of a kind reception. Surely the work of the Christian minister is important. We would say even more: It is indispensable to the highest good of the human soul. The work of the oxen in treading out the grain has, in many countries, been superseded. Threshing machines have been invented, and

THE USE OF THE OX IS ANTIQUATED.

Not so the minister of Christ.* So long as the human heart is stained with sin and weighted with sorrow, so long will it need to hear the old, old story of Jesus and His love. Whatever our advances in education, civilization, power, wealth, we cannot do without the ministry of the Gospel. The inventive brain of man will more easily find substitutes for air, water and light than it will for the Gospel of God's grace. Nothing has ever been invented that can take the place of those, and nothing that can supersede this. Many things have been tried, have failed, are forgotten. Many things are being tried, and will share the same fate, for, as has been well said, "they are nothing more than new balloon routes to empty heavens and obliterated gods." The more we see the good effects of the old Gospel on the hearts and lives of men, the more confidence have we in its power. Nothing else is needed to give peace to the conscience and purity to the life; nothing else on this earth is working constantly for righteousness. For a holy life, for a triumphant death, for a glorious eternity, how necessary, and yet how sufficient, is the ministry of the Gospel of God's grace.

* I met with two gentlemen, who told me that in the earlier days of settlement in Canada, oxen were used for this purpose. One said that to get on with them at all you had to feed them well. The other said you must treat them kindly. Let us join the two statements, "Feed them well, and treat them kindly." Good advice for the oxen on the Saviour's threshing floor.

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Yet, like the work of the oxen, the work of the min-
isters of the Gospel is *humble*. There is nothing in it
outwardly attractive. Though they have done more
for the good of the world than any other class of
men, as a rule,

THEIR SERVICES ARE IGNORED

and their work lightly esteemed. We have often
heard of titles and decorations being granted for the
killing of bodies; who ever heard of their being
given for the winning of souls? Yet this, above all
other noble deeds, deserves reward, and when all
earthly honours shall have vanished into thin air, they
that turn many to righteousness shall shine, as the
stars, for ever and ever. Some modern apostles of
sweetness and light, some philosophers, and scientists,
and newspaper editors, big with a sense of their own
importance, pooh-pooh the power of the Gospel;
and we do not wonder at it, for they know nothing
of what they speak. But who that has ever felt it
can ever doubt that the Gospel is the power of God
unto Salvation. Some editors of daily newspapers
very complacently assert, that their influence is far
greater than that of the pulpit. Now it cannot be
disputed, that most editors address larger audiences
than most ministers; but do they, dare they, bring
the only saving power that exists to bear upon their
readers? Do they know nothing among men but
Jesus Christ, and Him crucified? What, then, does
their influence amount to? All the galvanic batteries
in the world could not give life to a dead body, and
all the editorials in the world, if they ignore the
Gospel, will never quicken a dead soul. Neverthe-
less "it has pleased God *by the foolishness of preach-
ing to save them than believe.*"

THE POWER OF THE PRESS

so high-toned, so influential, so independent, is often
lauded to the skies; what does it amount to in
too many cases? The following extract may help
to furnish an answer. "Hear what John Swinton,
one of the ablest and most experienced newspaper
men of New York, said at a dinner some years ago.
He was called upon to respond to a toast: 'The
Independent Press,' and after some hesitation said:
—'There is no such thing in America as an 'In-
dependent Press,' unless it is out in secluded country
towns. You are all slaves. You know it, and I
know it. There is not one of you that dares to
express an honest opinion. If you expressed it, you
would know beforehand that it would never appear
in print. I am paid \$150 for keeping honest opinions
out of the paper I am connected with. Others of
you are paid liberal salaries for doing similar things.
If I should allow honest opinions to be printed in one
issue of my paper, I would be like Othello before
twenty-four hours. My occupation would be gone.
The man who would be so foolish as to write honest
opinions would be on the street looking for an honest
job. The business of a New York journalist is to
distort truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to fawn
at the feet of Mammon, and sell his country and
his race for his daily bread, or for what is about the
same, his salary. You know this, and I know it, and
what foolery to be toasting an 'Independent Press.'
We are all the tools and vassals of rich men behind
the scenes. We are jumping-jacks. They pull the
string and we dance. Our time, our talents, our
lives, our possibilities, are all the property of rich
men."

I know nothing of the man who thus speaks, but
I fear too many newspapers are conducted very much
as he describes. God save the world from the gospel
of such men. Yet they do vaunt themselves loudly.
No wonder that with such the Ministry of the Gospel
is lightly esteemed.

Again, like the work of the oxen, the work of the
ministers of the Gospel is

LABORIOUS.

Many think otherwise; many think their life one
long holiday. Not a few grumble at them as if they
were only drones in the human hive. When I have
listened to such grumblers, I have often felt inclined
to deal with them as the farmer's wife did with her
grumbling husband, who was forever saying he could
do more work in one day than she could do in three;
and I am pretty sure that if I did so, the result would
be exactly the same. Yet, still it must be acknow-
ledged, that a man whose heart is not in the work
may be a great idler on the Gospel threshing floor.
Just as some lazy ox, instead of treading out the
grain, would lie down on the threshing floor and
gorge itself to repletion, so have I seen and heard of
sleek ecclesiastics, who have thought that the great
end for which the church existed was to keep them in
ease and comfort. Such faithless ministers, like lazy
oxen, are a sheer incumbrance, and the sharper the
goad of contempt and scorn with which their hides
are pierced, the better for the work of the Lord.
Yet, notwithstanding, to the true minister of Christ,
this work is very laborious. In innumerable ways
his thoughts, his sympathies, and his activities are
continually drawn forth, and yet there is a sameness
in his work, like the ceaseless round of the ox upon
the threshing floor, which is very apt to produce
weariness and the merely mechanical performance of
the highest functions. Oh, it is no easy work for the
minister of the Gospel to do all he has to do, to do
it as it ought to be done, to do it as he desires to
do it.

But here we are also taught concerning THE SUP-
PORT OF THE MINISTRY. This also is divinely
ordained. As certainly as God has ordained certain
men to preach His Gospel, so certainly has he made
provision for their support.

We might come to this conclusion from a consid-
eration of the necessities of the case. They who do
this work are

MEN, NOT ANGELS,

human beings, having the same necessities, limita-
tions, and liberties as their fellows. If, therefore,
such beings devote themselves exclusively to this
work, it is plain that provision must be made for
them. It might have been otherwise. Instead of
men, God might have set apart angels to this work.
Then, think of it; there would have been no need of
collections, or pew-rents, or weekly offerings. There
would have been no need of college endowment
funds. Home mission, French evangelization and
Foreign mission funds would cease to exist. There
would be no aged and infirm ministers; no widows
and orphans needing our care. There would have
been no need to attend so laboriously to the augmen-
tation of stipends. Then the labourers would not have
needed a cent. "Ah!" I hear some one say,

HOW GLORIOUS

that would have been! How freely would the Gospel
have been preached! How much more heavenly and

spiritual! How infinitely superior in every respect to the present condition of things! How much better than this continual dunning of people for money; this eternal cry of 'Give, give, give'; this turning the pulpit into a begging box! Our hands are never out of our pockets. Stop, sir, stop; I can listen to such talk no longer. Let me ask you a few plain questions in all earnestness. Do you think God is a fool? Do you think He has made a huge mistake in arranging for the preaching of the Gospel by men and not by angels? Better tell Him that to His face; but until you are prepared to do so, better hold your tongue, *say*, and let not even your heart harbour for an instant such an impious thought. Why is it that God has arranged for the preaching of His Gospel by beings compassed with infirmity, beings requiring material support? Is it because the angels think such work

BENEATH THEIR DIGNITY?

Nay, the highest angel in heaven would think it his greatest honour to stand in the place of the most obscure minister of the Gospel, preaching to the smallest audience in the world. Is it then because God cannot spare the angels from their higher duties? Nay, there is in God's universe no duty or privilege higher than exalting the name of the only begotten Son of God as the Saviour of sinners. There is no work more pleasing to God the Father. The angels came with delight to roll the stone away from His sepulchre, and to fold the linen clothes in which His body was wrapped. The smallest service for the Lord Jesus is a work excelling in glory. Is it then because God wishes this work to be done at

AS CHEAP A RATE AS POSSIBLE,

and therefore puts part of the burden on us? Perish the thought forever in the sight of the great sacrifice He has made, the unspeakable gift He has bestowed, even His own Son—dearer to Him than all things visible and invisible. What! does the Almighty need our help? Does the Creator of the ends of the earth need our money? Nay, but He knows that *we* need to learn the God-like glory of giving, of giving for such a cause. He would have us children worthy of Himself, knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Therefore, for our good, for our present and future blessedness, He has committed this ministry into human hands. This is part also of our spiritual training, an arrangement made for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

We might also come to this conclusion from thinking on God's ways. If these are His servants, will He not see that they are paid? If they are His soldiers, will He send them a warfare at their own charges? If they are His oxen, will He muzzle them? If He takes care for oxen, much more will He take care for the ministers of His Gospel. And the remembrance of God's past arrangements makes us come to the same conclusion. When He set apart one of the twelve tribes to attend to spiritual matters, He made liberal provision for them. He gave them cities to live in, fields for their cattle, a tenth part of the produce of the fields of their brethren, and in addition urged His people to remember them with special gifts in seasons of thankfulness.

HAS GOD GROWN LESS GENEROUS?

Is He less interested in the support of these men whom He has ordained to preach the Gospel to every creature in the world than He was in the support of

those whom He had ordained to conserve the truth in Canaan till His Son should come? Is He less anxious about those who are torch-bearers to every land of darkness than He was about those who trimmed the lamp and kept it burning in that little land? Nay, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But, apart altogether from such inferences as these, we have

THE PLAIN DECLARATION,

"They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. *Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*" This is a matter which God has thus ordained; therefore, if any find fault, let him know that he finds fault with God. Hence, also we have the plain command, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in every good thing." Nothing could be more plain and emphatic. And remember, it is in connection with this commandment that we have the solemn warning, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." With how many is the support of the ministry

A MERE MOCKERY?

The Rev. Newman Hall tells the following: "I remember once dining at the house of a wealthy merchant, who, though he loved the house of God, was not remarkable for generous contributions, and who said to me across the table that his thoughts had wandered at church in the morning service by calculating that during thirty years he had paid in pew rent upwards of £300 (\$1,500). It was, perhaps, rude in me, but my spirit was stirred to reply: 'Less sir, than for blacking the shoes of your household.' After a pause, he frankly said: 'That is true!' I heard no more of the payment of pew rent as a sign of generosity."

How many think if their own minister is fairly supported their responsibilities cease, as if their little corner of the vineyard constituted the whole Church of Christ. One of the saddest sights in any church, and one of the most hurtful, is the selfishness of a numerous and well-to-do congregation. Not only does it withhold the money which is sorely needed, but its evil example is imitated and its selfish policy adopted by others, to the hindrance of Christian fruitfulness. Little do they dream what mischief they may do in the heritage of the Lord. A large tract of land in Glengarry, Ontario, has been rendered utterly useless by the introduction of *one flower* into the garden of a Roman Catholic bishop there. From one little plant with a beautiful blue flower, it has multiplied into millions and overrun thousands of acres, utterly destroying their fruitfulness; and so the people now call it

THE BISHOP'S CURSE.

Selfishness in any strong congregation is like that weed, and if it is not utterly rooted out will work fearful havoc in the whole Church. The bishop's curse is nothing to it. The strong need to be reminded that they must bear the burdens of the weak, and so fulfil the law of Christ. I was once talking with a farmer on this subject, and as he did not seem to be particularly clear about it, I asked him if he could repeat the Shorter Catechism "Yes," said he; "I learned it when a boy, and I have not forgot

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it yet." "Well," I said, "let me hear you answer this question: 'What is required in the eighth commandment?'" He began to repeat the words, "The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves—" "Stop," I said; "Is that all the answer?" "No," he replied "there are other two words—'and others.'" "But don't most people put a full stop after 'ourselves,' and never dream that in order to obey the eighth commandment they have to think of others as well as themselves?" "That is true," he answered; "I never saw it in that light before."

While I thus speak I by no means forget the fact that some weak congregations could do a great deal better than they are now doing. Selfishness can be manifested just as easily by the weak as by the strong, and needs to be as sharply reprov'd. There are congregations, as well as individuals, which remind me of the story told of a mourner at a

SCOTCH FUNERAL.

There it was the custom (and a very beautiful one) for the friends of the deceased to carry him to his last resting-place by means of wooden supports under the coffin. The day happened to be hot and the road long, when one of those who were carrying noticed that his neighbour seemed quite cool and comfortable. He asked for an explanation. "Do you lift?" his neighbour whispered. "Yes, certainly; what do you do?" "I lean." That was the secret of his comfort. Even so in regard to this good work, and every other, there are some who lift and some who lean; some who labour, and some who rest; some who come to the help of the Lord, and some who deserve the curse of Meroz; and therefore we do well to remember that He who searches the heart is not mocked, but whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. How many in our congregations, both strong and weak, sow to the flesh—i. e., for pride, and show, and luxury, and greed, most liberally; while they sow to the spirit—i. e., for the maintenance and spread of the Gospel, oh, how niggardly! In how many cases is there spent on the ministry of the Gospel less than a tithe of what is spent on

USELESS LUXURIES OR HURTFUL INDULGENCES!

Are you among the number of these? Well, friend, sow on. Sow as you please; but remember "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."*

The support of the ministry being God's ordinance, it is not to be looked upon either as a matter of *charity* or as a mere *bargain*. How many seem to think that the minister is a genteel beggar, with a threadbare black coat, to whom it is a charity to toss a morsel out of their superfluity. How many seem to think that the minister is a man in their employment—a

*Who can doubt that if a tenth part of what is now spent by some of our church members on tobacco, sweets, and amusements (to say nothing of intoxicating drinks) were set apart for the support of the ministry we would have more than enough to give every minister of our Church \$1,000 a year and manse, and who would be any the worse for it? Some of our members would stare in astonishment if asked to give \$100 to start this fund, and yet they are able to give their children toys worth \$100 or more—and their friends a feast for which it would take many a poor minister a quarter's salary to pay; and we are brethren!

servant, to whom they have given a situation, with a promise of so much pay for so much work.*

How then are we to look upon this support? It is simply as circumstances allow, a falling in with

AN ARRANGEMENT

which our Father has made for the carrying on of that work with which is linked the highest good of the human soul. But when we speak of these things, some who profess to be exceedingly spiritual point to the *Apostle Paul*, and tell us that he did not live of the Gospel, but, instead, laboured with his own hands to support himself and friends. True, we reply. This is just the exception that proves the rule. Paul states very emphatically that he had a right to stop working with his hands, to marry a wife, and to become chargeable on the Church. He had the right, but he would not use it. It was to the praise of Paul that he would take no support from the Corinthian church; but it was to the perpetual blame of these Corinthians that they were not permitted to help him. And this reminds us of the fact that sometimes

THE BEST MINISTERS ARE THE WORST PAID.

Matthew Henry, in his pithy way, says that "a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry." Thank God, not always. No minister of the Gospel ever received less than the Apostle Paul, and who ever preached better? The fact that a man receives a big salary is no proof that he is a faithful minister of Christ. Perhaps it only proves that he is a trimmer and a time-server, able to get the soft side of the rich, and keep wealthy sinners at ease by prophesying smooth things, and crying "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

The fact, also, that a man receives a mere pittance is no proof that he is an unfaithful or inefficient minister of the Gospel. It may only be the proof that he is bold as a lion, and, whether men hear or forbear, declares the whole counsel of God. But, to return to Paul, if he refused to take a cent from these rich Corinthian curmudgeons, he takes care to say to them, "I robbed other Churches,† taking wages of them to

* These two ideas are not at all uncommon, as the following will show: On the first occasion on which I went to a missionary meeting in this country a farmer from Ireland told me the following with much glee:—"A farmer had three sons; and a gypsy, who professed to read fortunes, said to him that one of his sons would be a murderer, another a thief, and the third a beggar. This greatly distressed the good man, and after payment of a considerable sum the gypsy agreed to show him a way out of the difficulty. 'Make your first son,' he said, 'a doctor, and he can kill as he likes; make your second a lawyer, and he can take what he likes; make the third a minister, and he must be a beggar all his days.' I leave the doctors and the lawyers to arrange their part of the story as they please; but only the other day, in going into a bazaar, and asking if I had to pay, I was answered: 'Oh, ministers have always to beg their way, so you may go in free.' Indeed, have we not earned, in the prosecution of this very work, the following degree: 'A sturdy beggar.'"

In regard to the other idea, I shall never forget the tone of injured dignity with which a hard-headed office-bearer referred to the action of his young minister, who dared to have an opinion contrary to himself: "That he should tak sic liberties. He should mind that I have been connect with this kirk for mair nor twenty years, and have often wrocht hard in't to mak a setawashun for that young man."

† Yet these other churches did not grumble that the burden of the apostle's support should fall partly on them, while the rich Corinthians, who were well able to pay Paul, gave him nothing. Such reasoning, though seemingly wise, is entirely sophistical and contrary to the spirit of that gospel which says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The only plausi-

do you service." Again and again he gladly received money from the poor but beloved brethren in Philippi. What a delightful glow of thankfulness is there in that letter he writes to them from Rome, acknowledging their gifts. The money spent by these poor disciples on Paul the aged, and prisoner of Jesus Christ, was not wasted. It produced that exquisite epistle to the Philippians. What money could buy it now or replace it if it were lost?

TALK OF INVESTMENTS I

That money sent by Lydia, the widow who sold purple, and the jailor, and the rest of them, was the best investment they ever made. They are reaping the interest of it to-day. It will yield them a dividend of glory for ever and ever. Talk of millionaires. We don't know who are the millionaires when the will is read. Not till the books are opened and the record of Heaven is declared shall we know what any man is really worth. We have the authority of the Judge Himself that many a man who dies rich will be a pauper forever—unable to command even a drop of water. There are men in this world like the

EARTHENWARE MONEY BOXES

we had when we were children. It was easy putting money into them, but exceedingly hard to get anything out of them. What a trial of patience was it to get out a cent. We had to put a knife in the slit, turn it upside-down, and shake till our arms ached. Even so, are there not members in our churches who will gather and scrape and hoard all the time; but pity the man that tries to get anything out of them? He has need of a patience like Job's. Worse than the aching arms of boyhood, he will get many an aching heart, and all his pains will yield but a poor return. Ah well, there is a time coming when all these money boxes will be empty enough. Soon the hammer of death will fall and dash them in pieces, and then, what a scattering there will be.*

This support of the minister should come from the people who are ministered to. This is reasonable. They are the people benefitted; therefore, they should support the labourers. All church history proves that this is the healthiest way of doing this work. "It is not wholesome that a priestly class should possess revenues independent of the people, and it is not wholesome that the people should enjoy spiritual privileges without being called upon to make some pecuniary sacrifice for them."

ble argument against this scheme which I have heard is just this—I shall try to put it in the very words addressed to me by a city gentleman. He said: "I know the farmers in such and such a district. They are rich men. Most of them have large farms of their own and money in the bank. They are far better off than I am, and far better able to support their ministers. Their conduct in giving their ministers such pittance is execrable." "I believe every word you say," was my answer. "But suppose you lived next door to a man who was such a wretched miser that he even grudged the food of his watch-dog and half starved it. Don't you think, though you execrated the conduct of his master, yet out of compassion for the poor beast you would chuck a bone over the fence now and then?" My friend smiled and said, "Yes, I would," and he did give me a very good bone. This idea was the seed of the parable with which this closes."

"I once heard a Scotchman who had prospered remarkably, and who was worth a great deal of money, but who was by no means noted for liberality, say the following to a friend in reference to giving: 'Man, Aleck, a'm no gude at coontin. When I gae'd to schule I began wi' adeeshin, and I have been learnin' a' my life. I hae nae come to substraachin yet.' He will soon.

This support of the ministry should be GENEROUS.

WE DO NOT DESIRE RICHES

for ministers. We have much sympathy with what Edward Irving said to a young minister in an ordination charge: "Oh, if thou shouldst become rich; oh, if thou shouldst die rich, I will be ashamed of thee." And we do not fear poverty. However ungenerous the support given to the ministers of the Gospel, the work will go on. See, is this a true minister of Christ Jesus! Feed him with bread and water. Clothe him in sheepskins and goatskins. House him in dens and caves of the earth. Do you stop his work? Do you shut his mouth? Nay. Hear his cry: "Necessity is laid on me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." But while we have no desire for riches, and no despair from poverty, yet we maintain that the support of the minister of the Gospel should be generous. Why? Because of the protracted training he has to go through before he can be called to one of our weakest congregations? Because of his capacity and attainments, and the money value of these in any ordinary occupation? I might give these and many such as sufficient reasons, but I purposely forbear. Instead, I would answer, but I should be generously supported because of

HIS POSITION IN SOCIETY.

He belongs to no class of society. Like the Gospel he preaches, he is equally related to all—high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant; therefore, he should be in such a position as to be able to approach the richest, as well as the poorest, and to be approachable by the poorest, as well as by the richest; and above all he should be raised above humiliating and ensnaring dependence on individuals.*

I would also say it should be generous

FOR THE SAKE OF HIS WORK.

It will be better done if he is raised above distracting cares. How can a man concentrate all his energies on this high work when he does not know how to make ends meet. How can he preach from the text, "Owe no man anything," when, through no fault of his, perhaps, but through culpable carelessness on the part of his people, he has a heavy account with this one and that one in his audience? In the columns of the *Canada Presbyterian*, the following appeared some time ago: "A lady, a member of Dr. John Hall's church in New York, was asked why she always went to hear Dr. Hall wherever he spoke, and she answered: 'It does me good to sit under him. Dr. Hall is just like a great sunbeam.' "Yes," said the editor, "\$10,000 a year and a little army of willing workers will go a long way to produce a sunbeam spirit; but it is hard for a minister to write a sunbeam sermon while he hears his wife scrape the bottom of the flour barrel in the next room." This witness is true. It would have been miserable economy to muzzle the ox, and it is

MISERABLE ECONOMY

to pinch the minister. Are there any muzzled oxen

* A friend in England once told me the following: He was to preach in a little country town, in a church which was looking out for a minister. Just before going into the pulpit, an office-bearer, by way of giving him a hint as to how he should conduct himself, said: "You know if you do not preach so as to please the people who sit in such and such a pew, you can't get on here." Diotrephes Moneybags is not dead yet.

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in our church, *i. e.*, are there any ministers not adequately supported? There is about one minister out of every three in the western section of our Church who receives less than \$750 a year, and most of these have to keep a horse off these small salaries in order to do their work. Fancy such a minister walking into a bookseller's store. He takes up a book and looks at it; he peeps into another; he reads the titles of a great many. The bookseller comes up to him; politely points out this new work and that new work; tells how helpful they would be to him in preparing for his pulpit. No need to tell him that. He has been thinking all the time, how much better that sermon would have been if he had been able to consult this authority. He never felt more keenly how hampered he was by the smallness of his library and his income. Oh! how the muzzles galls! Oh! how he wishes to have these works, but the muzzle of poverty is upon him, and he can't afford it. In this Canadian climate, he cannot act on the principle of Erasmus: "When I have money, I buy books; when I have any more, I buy clothes."

We often hear about the hardships of the Foreign mission field. I believe there are men in the poorer districts of our Church enduring greater hardships than any labourer in any Foreign mission field in the world. How they get on at all on their small stipends is a wonder. Were it not for the self-denying labours of

THEIR WIVES

it would in many cases be an impossibility. A friend once told me the experience of a lady of her acquaintance, who had married a minister. She had expected to lead a very useful life, in which she could do a great deal of good for others; but, she said, "I find my life is spent in washing dishes, and striving to make ends meet." Yes, and she is doing noble work, too, if she does indeed make ends meet, and keeps everything neat and clean. I once heard a minister, in receipt of a very good salary, say to some friends, in presence of his wife, "Well, as to small salaries, I must say this, when I began life in a city with \$1,000 a year, I was just as comfortable then as I am to-day." "If you were, I was not," his wife instantly replied. He had been in the habit of giving her all his money, and, therefore, the whole burden of making ends meet had fallen on her shoulders, and so, if he did not know the difference that a good income made, she did.

To give another illustration of how much the Church owes to the ministers' wives, who are in many cases splendid chancellors of the exchequer: I was once dining with a country brother, in presence of his nice large family. He had been in his charge for over twenty years, and had never all that time received over \$500, and had a horse and buggy and sleigh to keep off that. Smilingly he asked if I could guess how old his coat was. It was a very good coat, and I felt inclined to say two years, but I professed my inability to do so, and was just as glad I did, for he

told me that it was twenty years old. It was the coat in which he was married. Yes, I thought, and what carefulness and diligent housekeeping does this fact imply?

CAN WE DO ANYTHING

to remove the scandalous condition of things that exists? If we had \$35,000 per annum additional to what is now being raised, we could give each minister in the western section of the Church \$750 per annum and a manse. The General Assembly thinks this should and could be done. The question may be fairly asked, are the aid-receiving congregations doing what they might be expected to do? And the answer is, they are doing better than the self-supporting congregations. Last year, aid-receiving congregations contributed for ministerial stipend at the rate of \$7.15 per communicant, whereas the self-supporting contributed at the rate of \$4.90 per communicant for the same purpose. Were the self-supporting to contribute for ministerial support at the rate of the aid-receiving, they would raise \$150,000 more than they are now doing. Would it be unreasonable then to expect them to raise the whole \$35,000 additional, required for this work?

In presenting this matter to different congregations, I have received much encouragement, and have come to the conclusion that the matter requires only to be fairly stated to elicit a hearty response. After stating the case as in the preceding pages, one gentleman, unsolicited, promised \$200 for the first year to launch the scheme. A lady sent me a cheque for \$150. Another gentleman sent me a letter containing a \$100 bill, with directions not to let his name be known, but to forward it to the most muzzled minister I knew. A boy sent me \$2.00 out of his pocket-money, and a servant girl, probably newly out from the Old Country, gave me two sixpences. These are a few instances out of many that could be stated. If a like spirit was general, the thing could be easily accomplished; for after all it is not great in itself—not great as compared with our ability. Yet in another sense, it is great. It is great in regard to the amount of good which this money would accomplish. Think how many cares and hardships and privations it would abolish; how much sunshine it would bring to those who, though never complaining, have a weary struggle to maintain from year to year. Surely we dare not say in regard to this work, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Some there may be who have no heart for this work, who will never be at a loss to excuse themselves, and say in the most crabbled of accents, "I will not give you a cent"; but there are others who, like a good lady, whom we met, will ask with pain, "Why did you not tell us this before, that we might put an end to such a scandal?" Only let each one lay this matter before the Lord, and all will be well. For our encouragement and warning, let me conclude with

A PARABLE.

There was a certain rich man* whose name was Nabal, and his fields brought forth abundantly. Now, it came to pass in the time of harvest, that he rose early, and went to one of his threshing floors, and, seeing the ox eat of the ears of grain which he was treading out, it grieved him sore, and he said to his servant, "Why this waste? Take a muzzle and bind it on the mouth of the ox, that my substance be not wasted." And the servant did as he was commanded, and Nabal went his way. Now, about

*Our richer members could do a great deal of good at comparatively little expense by giving gifts of books to many ministers in our weaker charges, or, better still, by establishing a session library in all our congregations, rich and poor alike, for the use of the minister. As one who once possessed such a library, I can testify to its immense benefits. We have S. S. Libraries and Congregational Libraries. Why should there not also be a Session Library in connection with every Church? One of the best of these I have seen was in a Manse in a sea coast town in Scotland. The minister who occupied the Manse has since then attained great eminence as an exegete. Was there no connection between his valuable critical labours and that library?

noon, Ashel, the rich neighbour of Nabal, passed by, and the servant intreated him saying, "My master has commanded me to muzzle the ox, and he is very faint, for the sun is hot and the work is heavy; permit me, I pray thee, to take him to thy rich pasture for one hour, that he may eat and drink and be refreshed." And Ashel was wroth, and his countenance fell, and he said, "Must I make Nabal rich? Is it reason that I should waste my substance in fattening his oxen? Nay, verily. Bring him not to any of my fields." And when he went away angry, the heart of that servant was sad, for he grieved because of the ox. And a poor man, Hesel, drew nigh and said, "Grieve not because of this. Behold I have a little patch of grass and a well therein; lead the ox thither, and let him take his fill." And the servant said, "The blessing of the God of Israel,

who spake by the mouth of Moses saying, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,' rest upon thee and upon thy house, in that thou didst take compassion on the beast." So he passed by the rich pastures of Ashel and led the ox of Nabal to the poor man's little field. Which of these, therefore, Nabal, Ashel, Hesel, obeyed the law: "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn?" We have seen in what sense the Holy Ghost makes this law binding on us all in these gospel days. Let us take heed then, lest judging others in a lower sphere we condemn ourselves in a higher. Rather let us, beholding its glorious scope, sincerely pray, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Doing this there would not from this day be a single muzzled ox in all our borders. So let it be.

During the past year though I have preached the above sermon many times and in many places, I have never preached the whole of it in any one place; and at the suggestion of friends it is now sent out entire to the Church at large, in the hope that it may deepen the interest in the work of augmenting ministerial stipend, which is now going on. It is put into your hands freely, but if you feel inclined to pay for it you are heartily welcome to do so by placing any amount you please in stamps or otherwise in an envelope, and forwarding it to the Rev. R. H. Warden, 260 St. James Street, Montreal, Que. After the expenses of printing and distributing the sermon have been defrayed, all the moneys thus sent will be given to the Augmentation Fund. If in this way some relief is given to our much enduring ministers, I shall feel myself abundantly rewarded. Some friends who read this will remember what they said they would give me for a copy of this sermon. Here is the sermon—let Mr. Warden have the money; and kindly send it quickly, for the Church accounts close in April. And should you want any more copies, a better edition is in course of preparation, and will be on sale shortly at W. Drysdale & Co's, Montreal, from whom also extra copies of this edition can be obtained.

A. B. MACKAY.

MONTREAL, March 12th, 1884.



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